

Mendocino County Fish and Game Commission
Courthouse
Ukiah California 95482

December 10, 2007

Via email

Subject: Comments regarding the draft proposals for Marine Protected Areas on the North Central Coast.

To Members of North Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group and interested parties,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Mendocino County Fish and Game Commission concerning creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) in southern Mendocino County between Alder Creek and the Gualala River.

There are two areas that are very important to the economic well being of the local coastal communities of Manchester, Point Arena, Anchor Bay and Gualala.

The first is the area north of the Point Arena Harbor to the mouth of the Garcia River. This is a very important fishing ground for the sportfishermen who launch at the Point Arena Pier. The Point Arena Pier was built with primarily federal funding to provide economic development to the City of Point Arena and surrounding area. The city of Point Arena has an unemployment rate exceeding 25% and relies on the operation of the pier for sportfishing, commercial fishing, abalone diving and tourism dollars.

The consistent pattern of use by sport fishermen and divers is to launch their small boats and travel north of the harbor to operate in the area between the harbor and the mouth of the Garcia River. This is done for two reasons. First this is the area that has been providing very high quality fishing for rock fish for generations of anglers. Secondly the wind and current pattern is consistently out of the north in the summer months.

Operators of small boats understand that if the wind comes up as it can and often does or they have a problem with their boat, they can turn south and safely make it back to harbor.

The second area of importance is from Anchor Bay to Sail Rock to the north.

The Anchor Bay Campground provides an access point for fishermen to launch small boats for the purpose of fishing for salmon, rock fish, crabbing, and abalone diving.

For the same reasons as at the Point Arena Harbor, boaters primarily operate directly out front of the campground or head north to fish, dive, and crab.

Local residents and long time visitors have provided both written and oral testimony at a number of MLPA hearings to support the above key points.

Some understanding of the local area shows that due to the remoteness and lack of boat launch access to the north of Point Arena (the closest being Albion River), and south of Anchor Bay, (the closest being a small facility in Timber Cove and then Bodega Harbor), their currently exist large areas of defacto reserve. These areas have been serving the

objectives of resource protection of complex reef habitats for a very long time. With no projected or likely construction of new harbors, they will continue to do so.

These “in between” areas would be the most appropriate for the focus of the MLPA long term protection to meet goals while virtually eliminating economic impacts to the small port of Point Arena and the smaller port of Anchor Bay.

Additionally these areas north and south would continue to feed rock fish, crab, abalone, and salmon resources into the near port areas of Anchor Bay and Point Arena for long term sustainable harvest, recreation, and income to fragile local economies.

Sincerely,

Craig Bell – Chair, Mendocino County Fish and Game Commission